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ABSTRACT

Factors outside of psychology, both positive and negative, are pressing school psychology to re-examine itself. Thus, the time is right for a reconceptualization of doctoral school psychology. This reframing should take into account the relationship of doctoral school psychology to the larger fields of both school psychology and professional psychology. It is concluded that school psychology, as a setting-based discipline, is nondoctoral. However, it is suggested that psychological services to children, including services to and in the schools, must change to meet the demands of national systemic social reforms. These reforms constitute the best opportunity in many years to redefine psychological service delivery. Doctoral school psychologists may be unique among all psychological service providers at all levels in their skills and credentials to provide services across settings. However, at least two changes in doctoral school psychology may need to be considered to prepare for reformed service delivery: the identity of doctoral school psychology should extend beyond setting to reflect the broad range of skills and competencies possessed; and the school psychology core identity and training must be maintained in order to ensure the ability to move across current and reformed settings. Contains 15 references. (JBJ)

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Redefining Doctoral School Psychology

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Redefining Doctoral School Psychology

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Rick Jay Short Ronda C. Talley

Overview

Factors outside of psychology, both positive and negative, are pressing school psychology to re-examine itself (Short & Talley, in press). On the positive side, we have reported significant opportunities for psychologists in school-related roles within education reform and health care reform legislation (Short & Talley, 1994; Talley & Short, 1994; in press). To explore psychology's place in these reform movements, Division 16 has developed a task force to examine the specialty of school psychology within the framework of professional psychology. The Council of Directors of School Psychology Programs (CDSPP), in collaboration with the APA Center for Education and Training in Psychology (CETP), is sponsoring a pre-APA convention meeting on redefining doctoral school psychology. At the same time, the Division 16 Administrators of School Psychological Services (ASPS) Group and the APA Center for Psychology in Schools and Education (CPSE) will co-sponsor "Creating a New Vision of School Psychology: Emerging Models of Psychological Practice in Schools," which will consider the identity of school psychology from a practitioner's perspective.

On the negative side, we have noted a number of instances where federal regulatory language specifically excludes school psychology from roles that are open to other professional psychology specializations (e.g., National Health Service Corps). There are other instances in which school psychology simply is not included in lists of psychologists eligible for fellowships (e.g., the most recent Patricia Roberts Harris Fellowship guidelines). Many of these possibilities will necessitate a thorough evaluation of school psychology's nature, identity, and contribution in order to take advantage of these opportunities.

As we have proposed in a previous paper (Talley & Short, 1994), we believe that the above factors, among others, indicate that the time is right for a reconceptualization of doctoral school psychology. This reframing should take into account the relationship of doctoral school psychology to the larger fields of both school psychology and professional psychology. Within the context of the current state of practice of school psychology, we also present a proposal based on several major premises, all of which have some empirical and experiential support. These premises are listed below.

1. Recent comprehensive reform initiatives will require psychological practitioners to possess the skills,credentials, and identity to cross service boundaries and to integrate services in a facile manner.
2. Doctoral school psychology provides the skills and credentials to span settings.
3. Psychology (sometimes called professional psychology) is a doctoral profession based primarily outside of the schools.
4. School psychology is a separate, nondoctoral profession based in the schools.

Opportunities and Challenges from Social Reforms

As we have noted elsewhere (Talley & Short, in press), reform of the health care system, including a renewed emphasis on school health, offers psychologists opportunities for practice that would have been considered highly unusual even five years ago. For example, with the move toward school-based health clinics and centers, psychologists are being asked to provide not only traditional mental health services in the schools, but also systemic services that focus on broad-based community prevention activities. Health care reform is putting psychology in its truest sense back into the schools.

As suggested in *Reforming America's Schools: Psychology's Role* (Talley & Short, 1995), education reform is also providing new challenges for psychologists. Under education reform, psychologists are being challenged to assist in reframing schools, providing systemic needs assessment, planning and evaluation of educational outcomes using new forms of assessment (performance, functional, etc.) and interjecting behavioral health and child development into the traditional education service delivery mix. The convergence of health and education reform in legislation such as the Kentucky Education Reform Act suggests that not only are new skills needed, but psychology also would benefit from a new public perception of psychologists involved in such innovative efforts.

In addition, a third reform movement, the reform in human services arenas, like services integration, requires new skills as well as a reconceptualization of our place in service to America's children and youth. The buzz words of "collaborative" and "teaming" suggest that in order to meet the *comprehensive* needs of children, we must partner intraprofessionally, interprofessionally, and across systems (schools, community mental health, juvenile justice, health services, etc.) in order to address fully the tremendous human needs. New models of school-based and -linked, as well as community-based and -linked services, will require new ways of delivering services across settings that allowdifferent disciplines and specialties to work in concert rather than in competition. Psychologists who demonstrate mastery in service integration will flourish because of their depth of technical competence and their breadth of process skills.

Doctoral School Psychology: Multiple Settings, Multiple Roles

Doctoral education and training in school psychology provides formal preparation for practice both within and outside of the schools (Reschly & McMaster-Beyer, 1991). In addition to core school psychology coursework equal to (at least in hours) specialist training, doctoral school psychology programs are offering more hours of training in settings other than schools. According to Reschly & McMaster-Beyer, these additional requirements prepare doctoral school psychologists both for school-based practice and broader, extra-school practice.

Even though licensed psychologists are credentialed to provide services to the public, they often cannot be employed by the schools without additional certification from state departments of education. This constitutes an interesting mutual exclusion phenomenon: school psychologists (nondoctoral practitioners credentialed by state departments of education) typically cannot practice outside of the schools, and licensed psychologists (doctoral practitioners credentialed by state boards of psychology) typically cannot practice as employees of the schools. The single exception to this bottleneck is the doctoral school psychologist, who can be credentialed to practice by both agencies.

Professional Psychology as a Doctoral Profession

It is clear, if not noncontroversial, that the more general practice of psychology currently requires the doctoral degree and a license. Although some writers have suggested that there is little empirical support for requiring the doctorate for independent practice of psychology (e.g., Coulter, 1989), recent articles have provided some justification for the requirement (Reschly & McMaster-Beyer, 1991; Robiner, Arbisi, & Edwall, 1994). Licensed psychologists typically practice in a range of settings, with a variety of clients, using an assortment of treatment techniques within their expertise.

Credentialling for the independent practice of psychology by state boards of psychology almost mirrors the aforementioned state department of education school psychology credentialling guidelines. Whereas most state departments of education recognize only the nondoctoral degree for credentialling as a school psychologist, most state licensing boards acknowledge only the doctoral degree for full credentialling as a psychologist. Although licensing boards typically require some designation of specialty (e.g., clinical, counseling, school) by the licensee, most psychology licenses are generic (Prus, Curtis, Draper, & Hunley, 1995). With a few exceptions, psychologists are licensed to practice as psychologists, rather than as practitioners of their specialization.

Nondoctoral School Psychology

Many writers have concluded that school psychology, similar to counseling and social work, has gained such focus and articulation that the nondoctoral level now defines the discipline. In a recent theme section of *School Psychology Review,* entitled "Will the Real School Psychologist Please Stand Up: Is the Past a Prologue for the Future of School Psychology?" (Fagan, 1994), Jack Bardon asserted the following: "I cannot tell you if we school psychology will be around in 2010. I think we will be, but we may not. Our hope is to take seriously that we are now a separate nondoctoral profession. . ." (Bardon, 1994, p. 587).

Although we believe that doctoral school psychology makes a vital contribution to psychology, our examination of evidence from the literature and from our own experience forced us to conclude that Bardon's statement has considerable support. Questions of who practices school psychology in the schools, what training these practitioners receive, what these practitioners do in the schools, and who is eligible for credentialling as a school psychologist all point toward Bardon's concept of a nondoctoral profession -- that nondoctoral school psychology represents the primary, the sufficient, and indeed the only required, level of training for practice in the schools.

Education and Training for School Practice

Since the mid-1970s, the accepted level for education and training for practice in the schools has advanced from the master's level to the specialist level (Reschly & McMaster-Beyer, 1991). Specialist-level training in school psychology typically consists of two years of coursework, plus one year of full-time internship. Adopting this level of training as the standard has resulted in a cadre of professionals with more training than any other group of

practitioners in the schools. Whereas doctoral practitioners often practice in the schools and bring considerable expertise to their roles as school psychologists, most school-based practitioners have been trained at the nondoctoral level.

Credentialling and Regulation for School Practice

For most state departments of education, school-based practice of school psychology has been set for a number of years at the nondoctoral level. A recent summary of data (Prus et al., 1995) shows that almost all state education agencies (47, or over 92 percent) grant full use of the title "school psychologist" to appropriately-credentialed nondoctoral school practitioners. Most states (38, or almost 75 percent) do not list the doctoral level in their credentialling standards, suggesting that the ceiling for credentialling in school psychology in those states is the nondoctoral degree. In these states, the nondoctoral degree appears to be not the entry level, but the *only* level credentialed for practice. State credentialling for school-based school psychology is almost entirely nondoctoral and, perhaps more important for doctoral school psychology, mostly single-level.

The Nature of School Practice

Despite at least two decades of efforts to expand the practice of psychology in the schools, the predominant practice model continues to be that of the special-education-related psychoeducational examiner (Reschly & Wilson, 1995). Within this model, the psychologist primarily performs technical roles of assessment and participation in team decision-making concerning problems in student learning and achievement. One explanation for the prevalence of the psychoeducational examiner model undoubtedly lies in the organization and structure of American schools. Another probably has to do with role specifications derived from federal and state special education legislation. Regardless of the reasons for the resilience of this model for school-based practice, it seems clear that acceptable practice within the model does not require doctoral training. A review of several surveys concerning who practices school psychology in the schools indicates that an impressive majority of these practitioners hold a nondoctoral degree (Smith, 1995).

Practice Incentives

Many doctoral-level school psychologists work effectively and happily as practitioners in the schools. However, many other school-based doctoral practitioners migrate to administrative positions in the schools, and many doctoral-level practitioners choose not to practice in the schools (Short & Rosenthal, 1994). At least part of the reason for this choice is the lack of incentives from the schools for professionals with doctorates. Schools and school systems often provide little or no financial rewards for the advanced degree. Also, there often is little distinction between doctoral and nondoctoral school psychologists in terms of job duties and expectations from teachers, administrators, andparents.

Summary

As did Bardon, we have concluded that school psychology, as a setting-based discipline, is nondoctoral. The entry level is nondoctoral and modal practice is nondoctoral. Nondoctoral education and training in school psychology appears to be at least adequate for current practice, as well as for that of the immediate future. Credentialling in school psychology is predominantly uni-level, nondoctoral, and separate from credentialling in psychology.

However, we also have suggested (Talley & Short, 1994) that psychological services to children, including services to and in the schools, must change to meet the demands of national systemic social reforms. These reforms constitute perhaps the best opportunity in many years to redefine psychological service delivery. In any case, reformed service delivery will require integrated communication and services across many community agencies, including the schools. Practitioners who are prepared and credentialed to negotiate across settings to provide these services will be critical to the success of social reform. Doctoral school psychologists may be unique among all psychological service providers at all levels in their skills and credentials -- at this very moment -- to provide services across settings.

However, at least two changes in doctoral school psychology may need to be considered to prepare us for reformed service delivery. First, we propose a re-evaluation of our identity at the doctoral level. Acknowledging the nondoctoral nature and identity of school psychology begs the question of the identity of doctoral school psychology. We believe that the training that doctoral school psychologists receive prepares them for roles within and outside of the schools, as well as giving them perspectives and expertise to handle these roles effectively. Often, however, this versatility gets lost in the school psychology title and identity, sometimes relegating well-trained doctoral practitioners to artificial limitations.

The identity of doctoral school psychology should extend beyond setting to reflect the broad range of skills and competencies -- systemic and individual -- that most doctoral school psychologists possess. This reconceptualization

of identity also would allow us to "bring home" the large number of doctoral school psychologists who practice outside of the schools. These psychologists often do not consider themselves school psychologists because of their current practice setting, yet they value their school psychology training and provide services to children, youth, and families (Short & Rosenthal, 1994). As we have said earlier (Talley & Short, 1994), the identity of the doctoral school psychologist may need to evolve beyond school psychology to some type of school psychology-plus. School psychology should be setting-based while doctoral-level psychology that incorporates school psychology should not be setting dependent. It may be that we should consider calling doctoral-level psychology that serves schools, children, youth, and families something other than school psychology, although the school component should remain prominent. A term previously used by one of us in this context is "professional child psychology."

Second, we must maintain our school psychology core identity and training in order to ensure our ability to move across settings, yet be able to use the advanced training that the doctorate represents to develop new educational, public health, and primary health competencies and identity (Talley, Short, & Kolbe, 1995). Training in professional child psychology should subsume credentialable school psychology in its core, and all doctoral psychologists within this specialization should be required to be credentialable in school psychology. Thus, the first two years of a doctoral program in psychology would constitute quality preparation in school psychology. Subsequent training and education would move away from school psychology in both identity and content. In this way, school psychology credentialling needs would always be filled, but unique and relevant preparation also would be provided. As a result, all professional child psychologists would be prepared and credentialable for service delivery both within and outside the school as they care for children, youth, and families.

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